

**The Army of the South-West, and the First Campaign in Arkansas.  
Chapter Thirteenth (pt. 2) & Fourteenth**

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No. I.

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## THE ARMY OF THE SOUTH-WEST, AND THE FIRST CAMPAIGN IN ARKANSAS.

BY SAM'L PRENTIS CURTIS,

BREVET CAPTAIN AND AID-DE-CAMP TO MAJOR GENERAL CURTIS.

### CHAPTER THIRTEENTH.

(Continued from page 270.)

After a five days' occupancy, on April 16th the army left Forsyth and continued the retrograde movement northeastward. Headquarters of the Commanding General moved up the valley of Swan Creek, passing through the deserted village of Taney City, and after a ten miles' march camped on Billone Creek. Here Curtis remained three days, awaiting, amid almost constant rain, the progress of his troops. Supplies had been brought direct from Springfield to Forsyth, but notwithstanding the most energetic efforts, the amount received was very small. The great distance of the army from Rolla, its constantly shifting position, the inadequate and worn out condition of the trains, the great scarcity of animals, the almost impassable nature of the rugged and primitive mountainous roads, the swollen condition of the deep and rapid streams, aggravated by almost constant rains, the deep mud encountered in the alluvial valleys, rendered the transportation of supplies sufficient for the use of the army almost an impossibility. But little forage or subsistence could be obtained in the primitive and thinly settled country traversed by the army. On the march, the country was scoured for a distance of from twenty to fifty miles in

either direction for forage and grain. All the mills within twenty miles of the line of march were kept constantly at work in the production of flour and cornmeal. Forage was remarkably scarce. The soldiers were suffering for shoes and clothing. Cavalry and artillery horses were much needed; horse-shoes were also in great demand. The scarcity of subsistence often rendered the rations of men and animals very light, but the army pressed onward.

The difficulties of the march were very great, but from April 16th, when they left Forsyth, until May 2d, when their advance reached Batesville, Arkansas, a distance, by the route traveled, of 165 miles, the troops moved with the utmost possible rapidity. From Forsyth the route lay up the valley of Swan Creek, through Taney City, thence northeasterly, crossing the streams of Little Beaver and Big Beaver, through Arno, crossing Cowskin Creek and Hunter's Fork to Vera Cruz, county seat of Douglass County, Missouri, on Bryant's Fork, a distance of forty-nine miles. From Vera Cruz the route continued easterly, crossing Bryant's Fork and Big North Fork to West Plains, county seat of Howell County, Missouri, a distance of forty-three miles. From West Plains the route turned almost directly south, crossing Spring River to Salem, Arkansas, a distance of thirty-two miles. From Salem it continued in the same direction, crossing Strawberry River and Polk Bayou, through Polk Bayou P. O. to Batesville, Arkansas, a distance of forty-one miles.

On April 19th Curtis left Billou<sup>v</sup>e Creek, and after a four days' march arrived at Vera Cruz on the afternoon of the 22d. Vera Cruz consisted of three or four log houses and a mill, situated in a deep valley, on Bryant's Fork. It was entirely surrounded by the high hills of the Ozark. At night the evergreen forests on these hills were inflamed. A magnificent spectacle presented itself to the view. The camp appeared encircled by a vast amphitheatre of burning forests. High up on the hills the flames and smoke swept around and above the dark forms of the trees, and lit up the skies with a wild and luminous brilliance.

The country traversed was of the same wild, primitive, mountainous character. A few more inhabitants than had hitherto been met were found on the line of march. The rains were almost incessant. The roads were in a terrible condition. Some of the troops were nearly out of provisions, but at Arno a train arrived which supplied the most pressing wants. The divisions marched by different roads, at a considerable distance apart. The rains and swollen mountainous streams rendered the march very slow and difficult. The troops were much delayed. They were hurried forward with as much speed as could be obtained over the narrow, steep and stony roads of the Ozark.

On April 25th Curtis left Vera Cruz, and, after two days' rapid march, arrived at West Plains on the 27th. He was rapidly followed by the entire army. The country traversed was still the wild, broken region of the Ozark—high hills covered with forests of evergreen and scrub oak—until within about ten miles of West Plains, when it became more level and alluvial. The Ozark Mountains were now at length crossed. The entire campaign since leaving Rolla had thus far been conducted in the mountainous, hilly region of Missouri and northwestern Arkansas. The soldiers were now to bid farewell to the rocks and evergreens, the deep, cold streams, rough roads and pure air of the Ozark. They were next to traverse the swamps, cane brakes and cotton fields, the primeval forests and alluvial bottom lands of White River and Arkansas.

On arriving at West Plains, Curtis earnestly requested that additional supplies, teams, cavalry horses, tools, clothing and equipments of all kinds be forwarded to replace the machinery of the army worn out in the weary and laborious march over the Ozark. The line of supplies was at once established from Rolla, via Houston, to West Plains. All the mills for many miles, within reach of the army, were still kept constantly at work in the production of meal and flour.

Dispatches were received at West Plains from Halleck, at Pittsburg Landing. He directed a rapid onward movement to the Mississippi. Van Dorn was already at Corinth, and Price

was about to land at Memphis. The enemy, he said, moved five miles to one advanced by the Army of the South-West. News was also received from other sources of the embarkation of Price's army at Des Arc, on White River, for Memphis. The rebel army, in moving eastward from Van Buren, after the battle of Pea Ridge, had advanced mainly by steamboats on the Arkansas River to Little Rock, thence over the railroad to Duvall's Bluff and Des Arc, on White River, and thence down White River and up the Mississippi by steamboats to Memphis. The Army of the South-West had performed a wearisome and difficult march of one hundred and seventy-five miles, from Pea Ridge to West Plains, over the rough and almost impassable roads of the Ozark. Under such circumstances, it was not wonderful that the rebel army, traveling by steamboats and railroads, could move five miles to one obtained by the Army of the South-West, moving on foot over the mountains, with a worn out and insufficient wagon train, suffering for supplies and clothing, and compelled to scour for miles an almost uninhabited country for forage and subsistence.

Orders were also here received from the Secretary of War, directing that Captain A. W. Ellet, of the 59th Illinois Infantry, be permitted to select not exceeding six subaltern officers and a squad of not more than fifty men, all to be volunteers from his regiment. With these he was to proceed by the most direct route to St. Louis, and thence on "an important and dangerous expedition down the Mississippi." The order was obeyed, and Captain Ellet selected his men and started to St. Louis. This was the origin of the Mississippi Marine Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General A. W. Ellet.

An army numbering about 6,000 men had been pushed forward from Pilot Knob, Missouri, the terminus of the Iron Mountain railroad, from St. Louis, and was at Pocahontas, on Black River, in Arkansas, under command of Brigadier General Frederick Steele. Halleck had originally ordered this force to advance on Helena, Arkansas. Steele's force was



now placed under command of Curtis. It was an object to form a junction with this force as soon as practicable.

The guerrilla chief, Coleman, was reported to be at Batesville, seventy-three miles south, in Arkansas, with a force of four hundred rebels. He was daily receiving reinforcements, and it was determined, if possible, to capture his entire gang.

On April 29th, leaving most of the troops and his own headquarters and most of his staff at West Plains, with instructions to follow as rapidly as possible, Curtis advanced rapidly to the south, taking with him the 1st brigade of Osterhaus' division, consisting of infantry and Welfley's battery, and also detachments from the 3d Iowa and 3d Illinois cavalry regiments and Bowen's battalion, being all the cavalry force available.

On April 30th he camped at Salem. The remainder of the army followed with as much rapidity as could be obtained. As the troops moved south and left the elevated and colder regions of the Ozark, they found Spring far advanced. The woods were in full leaf, the air was mild and pleasant, and sometimes uncomfortably warm. At Batesville roses were in full bloom. The country traversed was rolling and hilly, well wooded, and well adapted to cultivation.

Curtis, with his advance guard, left Salem at noon on May 1st, and camped after a march of about fourteen miles. On the 2d he advanced to Polk Bayou, distant about sixteen miles from Batesville, and rested until evening. About ten o'clock P. M. the march was resumed, in the hope of capturing Coleman. The night was dark. Seventeen times the road crossed Polk Bayou, and the stream continually became deeper as it neared White River. The road was rough, and the frequent crossing of the creek rendered the advance slow and difficult. At five o'clock on the morning of the 3d, the troops reached Batesville and surrounded the town. The upper and lower ferries, the former at the town and the latter a mile below, were seized. It was found that Coleman was encamped in the woods on the south side of the river, out of range of our shells. His force was increased to about 1200 men. The Union troops occupied Batesville, but were not

able to cross and attack the enemy, as there were but two or three small flatboats available. A skirmishing fire was carried on across the river, at the lower ferry. The rebels gathered on the opposite shore. Under cover of the trees they would crawl up to the bank and fire across at the Union soldiers, at the same time using a great deal of profane language towards the "Yanks" and abolitionists. A Union Lieutenant was struck by a spent ball. A few rounds of shell from Bowen's mountain howitzers dispersed the rebels, wounding several and killing three. Among the killed was Lieut. Col. Douglas McBride, a son of the rebel General McBride. His body was left unburied by the rebels, who precipitately retreated from the vicinity. Several days afterward he was buried by a detail of Union soldiers.

Batesville was a beautiful place, situated one hundred and ninety miles south of Rolla. It had thus far escaped the ravages of war, and had much the appearance of a northern town. It had been a prominent business point. The streets were wide, and were lined by many elegant residences, surrounded by groves, flowers and shrubbery. After the long and wearisome march through the mountains, the army had suddenly found a garden in the wilderness. It was the county seat of Independence County, and contained at the commencement of the war a population of about 2,000 souls. Out of a voting population of 2,200, the county gave 1,100 votes for Union delegates to the convention which seceded Arkansas from the Union. When captured, the sentiment of Batesville was divided, but principally of a rebel cast. The women were especially bitter. The sour looks of the rebel maidens were at first disheartening to the gallantry of the soldiers. They, however, eventually became more amiable and agreeable. Several prominent rebels were captured in the town. At the post-office, a heavy mail, with the latest Little Rock and Memphis papers, and at the court-house, some hundred stand of arms, as well as a considerable amount of contraband property, were also seized.

The remainder of the army rapidly approached Batesville, and camped in its vicinity, and as far east as Sulphur Rock,

ten miles distant, on the Jacksonport road. A cavalry force was at once sent east along the northern bank of White River to Jacksonport, situated at the junction of White and Black Rivers, twenty-six miles from Batesville. This force arrived in Jacksonport on the morning of May 4th, and found the town already occupied by a portion of General Steele's command. The remainder of Steele's army rapidly arrived at Jacksonport, and Steele reported, for orders, and the strength, position and condition of his command, to Curtis. Rope ferries were immediately put in operation at Batesville, and new and more commodious boats were constructed.

The arrival of the Union army at Batesville was marked by a flowery and lengthy proclamation from the rebel Governor, Rector, dated May 5th. It recited that the enemy was ravaging the northeastern part of the State, while Arkansas troops were called to the defense of other portions of the Confederacy; portrayed the beauties of democratic liberty, State sovereignty, secession, etc., contrasted with the despotism of Lincoln and his hirelings; called for 4,500 men to act as home guards until the Confederacy would protect the State, and especially urged "gentlemen of leisure and wealth" to go and fight, leaving the tillers of the soil to raise something for subsistence.

An expedition was sent out which destroyed extensive saltpetre works of the rebels, about fourteen miles northwest of Batesville. Large numbers of citizens came into Batesville to take the oath of allegiance. It was apparent that a very considerable Union sentiment existed throughout the country, and only needed encouragement and protection to become everywhere conspicuous. A newspaper, "The Independent Balance," which had formerly existed in Batesville, advocating, variously, as they were the more popular, Union and rebel doctrines, was revived and set in operation by the military power. It was edited by Sergt. Maj. Tinkham, of the 4th Iowa cavalry, and served as a medium for disseminating Union doctrines and the latest news to the troops and



to the people, and for the publishing of general orders and other military information.

The 1st division and the 4th, 5th and a detachment of the 6th cavalry Missouri volunteers, under Osterhaus, crossed White River and pushed forward to Little Red River and the vicinity of the town of Searcey, in White County, about forty miles south of Batesville, on the direct road to and distant about forty-nine miles from Little Rock. Reconnoissances were thrown forward into the town of Searcey.

A cavalry expedition, under Lieut. Col. Wood, of the 1st Indiana cavalry, was also sent out by Steele, from Jacksonport, and penetrated as far as Augusta, on the east bank of White River. This expedition had two unimportant skirmishes with the enemy.

Halleck had intended to have the army of Curtis progress as rapidly as possible to some point on the Mississippi, where it would be of assistance in the capture of Memphis and in the opening of the Mississippi, and where it would be more accessible for supplies by water communication. It was also designed to capture Little Rock, and for this purpose Osterhaus had advanced to Little Red River.

At this period the Mississippi was flooded, and the low, swampy country east of Jacksonport was converted into a vast lake. Scouts sent eastward were unable to progress more than a few miles beyond Jacksonport. The country was perfectly impassable. Our gunboats were at the time besieging Fort Pillow, and it was even thought that the noise of the cannonading was heard near Jacksonport. The Army of the South-West was thus prevented by a flood from progressing eastward and assisting in any attempt to capture Memphis.

The army not being able to move eastward, Curtis intended to advance as rapidly as possible, via Searcey, and capture Little Rock. In addition to the line of communication with Rolla, an additional line was opened with Pilot Knob, and supplies were received over both routes. Garrisoned posts were established and maintained on the Rolla

line at Houston and West Plains, Missouri, and at Salem, Arkansas; and also on the Pilot Knob route at Smithville, Pocahontas and Pittman's Ferry, Arkansas, and at Reeves' Station, Pattersonville and Greenville, Missouri. Matters were thus being rapidly arranged for the capture of the rebel State capital.

But at this juncture a telegraphic order, dated May 6th, was received by Curtis on May 9th, through department headquarters at St. Louis, from Halleck, at Pittsburg Landing. Curtis was to send, "as rapidly as possible," a portion of the infantry of the army to Halleck, at Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, either via Rolla, Pilot Knob or the Mississippi. Their services were needed in the great concentration of national troops which occurred in front of Beauregard's position at Corinth. The order further said that Curtis "must operate in Arkansas mostly with cavalry and artillery. Van Dorn and Price are both here" (at Corinth). "Curtis' infantry must make forced marches, so as to reinforce us as soon as possible."

In obedience to this order, the 36th and 44th Illinois, 2d and 15th Missouri infantry volunteers, and Company C, Benton Hussars, were placed under command of Brig. Gen. Asboth, and called the 2d division. The 25th, 35th and 59th Illinois and 22d Indiana infantry volunteers and Company F, 1st Missouri cavalry volunteers, Capt. Clifford, were placed under command of Brig. General Jeff. C. Davis, and called the 3d division. In accordance with orders, Steele also detached two regiments from his command, the 21st and 38th Illinois infantry volunteers, under Colonel Carlin. All these troops were ordered to proceed by the most direct route, and as rapidly as possible, to Cape Girardeau, Missouri, there to await further orders.

In parting with officers and troops who had so long and so faithfully served under him, sharing alike the long and weary marches and the dangers of battle, the feelings of the commanding General were expressed in the following farewell order:

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE SOUTH-WEST, }  
 BATESVILLE, ARK., May 10th, 1862. }

*Special Orders,* }  
*No. 169.* }

\* \* \* \* \*

II. The troops moving under Brig. Gen. Asboth will bear the name of the 2d division, Army of the South-West, and those under Brig. Gen. J. C. Davis will be known as the 3d division, Army of the South-West. In parting with the officers and soldiers of these divisions, the General commanding feels an abiding confidence that they will show themselves, when called upon, no matter in what trying occasions, worthy of the fame that has gone before them, and he trusts they will add to the glory they have achieved under his command, and do more distinguished service for their country. The General tenders his thanks to Generals Asboth and Davis for their services and support, and to each and all the troops who march with them to Tennessee.

\* \* \* \* \*

By command of Major General Curtis,

H. Z. CURTIS, Asst. Adjt. Gen.

Asboth and Davis both expressed their regrets at parting with one who had for so long a time been their commander, and promised that their troops would maintain, in Tennessee, the glory already won during the campaign and at Pea Ridge, and that the honor of the Army of the South-West should remain, by them, forever untarnished.

The departure of these troops broke up the original organization of the Army of the South-West. The sudden withdrawal of so large a force, temporarily deranged all plans, and delayed the capture of Little Rock. A portion of Osterhaus' command had been withdrawn and departed for Cape Girardeau, but he still held his position at Little Red River. Steele had hitherto been camped at and in the vicinity of Jacksonport. He was now ordered to Batesville, and on May 15th left Jacksonport with the greater portion of his command. Only a small force of cavalry was left in that vicinity, on the west bank of Black River.

The troops remaining were at once reorganized in three divisions. The following statement will show the disposition of the forces under the new organization, and during the remainder of the campaign until the army arrived at Helena:

ARMY OF THE SOUTH-WEST, AS REORGANIZED AT BATESVILLE, ARKANSAS, MAY, 1862, COMMANDED BY MAJOR GENERAL SAMUEL RYAN CURTIS, U. S. VOLS.

*1st Division, Brigadier General FREDERICK STEELE.*

- 11th infantry Wisconsin volunteers, Colonel Harris.
- 33d infantry Illinois volunteers (normal regt.), Colonel C. E. Hovey.
- 8th infantry Indiana volunteers, Colonel David Shunk.
- 18th infantry Indiana volunteers, Colonel Thomas Pattison.
- 1st cavalry Indiana volunteers, Colonel Conrad Baker.
- 3d cavalry Iowa volunteers, Colonel Cyrus Bussey.
- 5th cavalry Illinois volunteers, Colonel Hall Wilson.
- 9th cavalry Illinois volunteers, Colonel Albert G. Brackett.
- 13th cavalry Illinois volunteers, Colonel Bell.
- "Kane County cavalry" Illinois volunteers (2 Cos.), Captain Dodson.
- 1st battery Indiana volunteers, Captain Klaus.
- 1st battery Missouri volunteers.
- 16th battery Ohio volunteers.
- Peoria battery Illinois volunteers, Captain Davidson.

*2d Division, Brigadier General EUGENE A. CARR.*

- ✓ 4th infantry Iowa volunteers, Colonel J. B. Williamson.
- ✓ 9th infantry Iowa volunteers, Colonel Wm. Vandever.
- 13th infantry Illinois volunteers, Colonel John B. Wyman.
- 1st cavalry Missouri volunteers, Lieut. Colonel Frederick Wm. Lewis.
- 3d cavalry Illinois volunteers, Colonel L. F. McCrillis.
- ✓ 4th cavalry Iowa volunteers, Colonel A. B. Porter.
- ✓ "Elbert's flying battery" Missouri volunteers, Captain Elbert.
- ✓ 1st battery Iowa volunteers, 1st Lieutenant Virgil J. David.
- ✓ 3d (Dubuque) battery Iowa volunteers, Captain M. M. Hayden.

*3d Division, Brigadier General PETER JOSEPH OSTERHAUS.*

- 3d infantry Missouri volunteers, Colonel Isaac F. Shepard.
- 12th infantry Missouri volunteers, Major Hugo Wangelin.
- 17th infantry Missouri volunteers, Colonel Franz Hassendeubel.
- 1st infantry Missouri volunteers (U. S. res. corps, det.) Col. Robt. I. Rombauer.
- 4th cavalry Missouri volunteers (Fremont Hussars), Colonel Geo. E. Waring.
- 5th cavalry Missouri volunteers (Benton Hussars), Colonel Joseph Nemett.
- 6th cavalry Missouri volunteers (detachments), Major Henry P. Hawkins and Lieutenant Colonel Saml. N. Wood.
- 5th cavalry Kansas volunteers, Colonel Powell Clayton.
- 2d battery Ohio volunteers, Lieutenant Chapman.
- Welfley's battery Missouri volunteers, Captain Martin Welfley.
- Hoffman's battery, Captain Hoffman.

*Unattached Corps.*

- "Bowen's battalion" cavalry Missouri volunteers (4 Cos.), Maj. Wm. D. Bowen.
- 24th infantry Missouri volunteers (6 Cos.) Provost Guard, Maj. Eli W. Weston.
- 2d cavalry Wisconsin volunteers (2 battalions), } Brig. General Cadwallader
- 10th cavalry Wisconsin volunteers (1 battalion), } C. Washburn.
- 1st infantry Arkansas volunteers (6 months' men), Lient. Col. J. C. Bundy.



*Brigade Commanders.*

1st brigade,	1st division,	Brig. General W. P. Benton.
2d " "	" "	Colonel C. E. Hovey.
3d " "	" "	" Conrad Baker.
1st " 2d	" "	" Wm. Vandever.
2d " "	" "	" John B. Wyman.
3d " "	" "	" A. B. Porter.
1st " 3d	" "	" Franz Hassendeubel.
2d " "	" "	" Geo. E. Waring.

## CHAPTER FOURTEENTH.

THE ARMY AT BATESVILLE.—MARCH TO LITTLE RED RIVER AND RETURN.—VARIOUS ENGAGEMENTS.—CORRESPONDENCE AND ORDERS.—ARKANSAS TROOPS.—EVACUATION OF BATESVILLE AND MARCH TO JACKSONPORT.—PREPARATIONS TO MOVE DOWN WHITE RIVER.

The telegraph line was extended south from Pilot Knob and over the Pilot Knob route to the headquarters of Curtis, at Batesville. It was continued from Batesville eastward to a point in the woods about ten miles distant from Jacksonport, but it was not completed to these points until a short time before the evacuation of Batesville, about the last of June.

On May 12th, Halleck sent the following telegram to Curtis, which was forwarded from the end of the line and received by the latter on May 15th :

ST. LOUIS, May 12th, 1862. }  
Monterey, Tennessee. }

TO MAJOR GENERAL CURTIS, BATESVILLE:

On reaching Little Rock, you will assume the direction of affairs in Arkansas as Military Governor. All civil authorities who are untrustworthy, or who will not take the oath of allegiance, will be removed from office and others appointed in their place. The telegraph will follow you as rapidly as possible.

H. W. HALLECK, Major General.

Although the army under General Curtis never arrived at Little Rock, the duties of Military Governor were by him performed, in the organization of the 1st regiment of Arkansas infantry volunteers, and in other ways, until his arrival at Helena, when John S. Phelps, of Missouri, was appointed Military Governor of the State, by the President.

On May 15th, by order of Halleck, the command of southwestern Missouri, and the line of posts from Rolla to Cassville, was relinquished to Brigadier General Egbert B. Brown, of the Missouri State Militia. The army of Curtis was thus left in a comparatively unencumbered situation to continue its operations in Arkansas, having only to sustain a portion of the garrison posts on its lines of communication in the rear.

The removal of the greater portion of the infantry from the army, although perhaps necessary to Halleck at Corinth, together with an order from the quartermaster department at St. Louis, which temporarily stopped all trains going to Curtis, delayed and ultimately prevented an advance on Little Rock by the Army of the South-West. Curtis appealed in strong terms to Halleck for reinforcements. His pickets and outposts were constantly assailed in the front and on the flanks by an ever-vigilant enemy, and the country in his rear swarmed with guerrillas and partisan bands, rendering large escorts necessary to every train, and endangering the weak garrisoned posts on his extended lines of communication. He was in the heart of an enemy's country. Troops temporarily left on post, garrison and other duties in southwestern Missouri, had been taken from his command by the order placing General Brown in command at Springfield. The departure of most of his infantry left the army too weak to move forward, but it was not until after the 5th of June, when the army had fallen back from Little Red River to Batesville, that a letter was received from Brigadier General Scofield, commanding the "District of the State of Missouri," who, by order of Halleck, placed under the command of Curtis all the troops in southern Missouri, including the peculiar organization known as the "Missouri State Militia," who were regularly enlisted into the United States military service, but retained, to a certain extent, under the control of the Governor of their State, upon condition that they were not to leave it except in its defense. This order did not, however, very materially increase the strength of the army, beyond enabling troops that had been detached from their divisions on post duty to rejoin their commands. The

Missouri State Militia garrisoned posts in Missouri, and Col. Rombauer's regiment of the "United States Reserve Corps," a home guard organization originated by Fremont, refused to cross the State line from Missouri into Arkansas. The terms of its enlistment provided that it should remain in Missouri. A portion of the regiment under Col. Rombauer was afterwards induced to march with the army to Helena. The remainder was left in Missouri, and the lack of patriotic spirit displayed by the regiment in refusing to march to the succor of its fellow soldiers in the front, was censured alike by Curtis and Scofield. General Washburn's command, the 13th Illinois cavalry, and the 5th Kansas cavalry, were also enabled to join the army of Curtis. These events, and the reorganization of the army, and changes in the lines of operation, caused a delay, which, joined to other circumstances, proved fatal to the forward movement on Little Rock. Whether, at the time, it would have been possible to maintain communication overland between Little Rock and Pilot Knob and Rolla, with the force then composing the army, is problematical. It was the opinion of Halleck that it could not be done, but Curtis thought otherwise, and was anxious to make the attempt.

An advance had been attempted via Searcey. A severe conflict occurred near "Searcey Landing," Little Red River, on May 19th, between the enemy and a foraging party from Osterhaus' division, composed of detachments of infantry and cavalry, numbering about two hundred, under command of Major Kielmansegge, of the 4th Missouri cavalry, subsequently reinforced by Colonel Waring and the 17th Missouri infantry, under Colonel Hassendeubel and Lieutenant Colonel Cramer. The Union troops were attacked by about eight hundred Texan rangers, and a portion of the infantry, after a proper resistance, offered to surrender; but the rebels continued firing on them, refusing to accept them as prisoners, and barbarously maltreating and murdering all who fell into their hands, and destroying ambulances sent to pick up the wounded. Being thus compelled to fight, the Union troops again attacked the enemy. The noise of the firing soon

brought the Union reinforcements, when the rebels retired from the field. The Union loss was seventeen killed, thirty-two wounded and two missing. The rebel advance was reported to have been commanded by General Rust and subsequently by General Hindman. Their entire loss was unknown. Eighteen of their dead were left upon the field.

As soon as the troops of Steele's division were drawn in from Jacksonport, on the remote left flank, to Batesville, on the direct line to Little Rock, and the army reorganized and the lines of communication with Rolla and Pilot Knob arranged, with a view to the better securing of supplies, the advance on the capital of Arkansas was attempted.

On May 19th, leaving Steele in command at Batesville, Curtis crossed White River and moved to Searcey with as much rapidity as was possible in a terrible rain-storm lasting thirty-six hours, which rendered the roads almost impassable. He remained at the front until summoned back to Batesville to attend to pressing duties.

At Searcey and on Little Red River were the divisions of Carr and Osterhaus. Little Red River had been bridged by the Union troops, and it was hoped that the army could soon move forward. But the muddy roads were rendered entirely impassable for a large force by the extremely severe rains occurring at this time. Little Red River, and other streams, swollen by the rains, could not be crossed by the army. The continual interruption of supply trains by guerrillas in Missouri, and the order from the quartermaster department at St. Louis, stopping these trains, deranged plans and prevented movement. Forage became entirely insufficient, and it was the opinion of Generals Steele, Carr and Osterhaus, in a consultation at Little Red River, whither, after the return of Curtis to Batesville, Steele had gone for that purpose, that the position on Little Red River must be abandoned. Skirmishes were of almost daily occurrence. The enemy was rallying in force, and with his newly recruited conscripts, was above the Union position, on Little Red River, endangering our right flank. "For God's sake," wrote Winslow, the chief Quartermaster of the army, to Curtis, "consider the



practicability of getting *trains* over the road you are going to take!" Carr, in particular, urged many reasons for the return of the army to Batesville, in good order, before it was attacked in its exposed position and overwhelmed by numbers. The impracticability of a further advance via Searcey became evident. Within forty-nine miles of Little Rock, the army had halted in its onward march. About the 5th of June it retraced its steps to the vicinity of Batesville; Carr remaining for a brief time in camp a few miles south of White River.

It is to be regretted that the occupation of the State capital was thus prevented by bad roads, inadequate force and the difficulty of transporting supplies. Rector, the rebel Governor, had ordered out 4,400 militia to oppose an advance, and the proclamation forbade troops leaving the State, which it was necessary for them to defend. There was, at the time, at or near Little Rock, a small force of about two and a half regiments of Texan rangers and the rebel gunboat "Kentucky." There were rumors of other troops, and the enemy was rapidly reinforced, but the place was very feebly protected. The gunboat, driven out of the Mississippi after the naval victory at Memphis, had sought refuge in the Arkansas River, and on its arrival at Little Rock had shelled the camp of the Texan rangers, supposing them to be Union troops. This reveals the reign of terror which existed among the enemy. The order of Rector calling out the militia met with a chilly reception by the people. Considerable Union sentiment existed, although everywhere, except within the Union lines, held in check and overawed by superior rebel power. Union men promised supplies of forage on the line of march. Prominent rebel citizens fled before the anticipated advance. Rector himself left Little Rock, and the State archives were removed from the city for safe keeping. Had it been possible to occupy the State capital and regularly inaugurate a provisional State government, comparative order and quiet might have been restored to Arkansas at a much earlier date than the time they were subsequently established. Once more rebellion was protected, not so much by its own

strength and valor, as by the difficulty of penetrating its vast territory. A few roving bands of guerrillas and partisan cavalry, aided by a small regular force of rebels in the front, and by roads almost absolutely impassable, were enabled to check the movements of an army, by hovering on its rear, cutting off its supplies and harrassing the feebler garrison posts on its lines of communication.

About the 2d of June a pontoon train was received, the first that had ever been with the Army of the South-West. At Rolla, in January, Curtis had applied to Halleck to send a pontoon train to the army, then about to advance over deep and flooded streams to attack Price. The reply was, that the only one available was needed elsewhere and could not be spared. The bridge received at Batesville was not of sufficient length to cross White River, but it was subsequently thrown across Black River at Jacksonport. It was placed in charge of Captain Van Sant, of the 24th Missouri infantry, and did good service among the swamps and bayous encountered between Jacksonport and Helena.

A cavalry reconnoissance under Lieut. Col. Sickles, of the 9th Illinois cavalry, was sent by Col. Brackett from Jacksonport, on May 26th, to Augusta, Cache River, and Cotton Plant. The object was to ascertain the position and condition of the enemy, and to capture the telegrams in the office of the Memphis and Little Rock telegraph line at Cotton Plant. The operator had, however, taken the alarm and fled, and all important documents were removed. In a skirmish with the enemy, on May 28th, at Cache River bridge, Col. Sickles had two men wounded. The rebel loss was four killed, four wounded and one taken prisoner. Col. Sickles returned with his command to Jacksonport on May 29th.

On May 27th a Union force under Lieutenant Colonel Lewis, of the 1st Missouri cavalry, attacked a rebel force at "Jeffrie's Mills," on the south side of White River, and a number of miles west of Searcey. The rebels were defeated with a loss of four killed and about twenty wounded. The Union loss was two wounded.

On May 29th, an expedition under command of Major Bowen, consisting of a detachment of the 3d Iowa cavalry, under Major Drake, and Bowen's battalion, had a severe skirmish with the enemy fifty-five miles west of Batesville. The engagement was variously styled "Richwoods," "Kickapoo Bottom," and "Sillamore." The Union loss was one killed, and Capt. Israel Anderson, of the 3d Iowa, and one other wounded. The rebels lost three killed and twenty-two taken prisoners. Major Bowen captured thirty-four rifles and shot-guns, about forty bowie knives, several swords and pistols, and thirty horses, with which he returned to Batesville.

Skirmishes by the outposts and scouting parties were in fact of almost daily occurrence, both at Batesville and during the remainder of the march to Helena. Many occurred of which no reliable official reports were ever given. It is impossible to present accounts of any save the more important of these engagements. In no instance were the Union forces defeated, and generally the rebels were dispersed with little difficulty. But they continually hovered upon the flanks, rear and front of the army, lying in wait for foraging parties, stragglers, and small detachments.

While the army remained at Batesville, and during its march through Arkansas, it was evident that very many of the citizens of Arkansas were still loyal to the Constitution and the old Union. They had been juggled out of the Union by the tricks of a convention which they had elected to oppose secession. Hitherto their State had escaped the devastation of war. The most bitter rebels had generally found their way into the rebel army. The Union citizens, unable to escape, had remained at home. The rebel law of conscription had not then been put in force, and these men had escaped the rebel army. Under the protection of the Union arms, hundreds voluntarily came forward and took the oath of allegiance. No compulsion was used, and the nature and obligations of the oath were fully explained to them before its administration. The fact that no government vouchers for

forage or other property received by the Union army, were ever paid until the applicant had established his loyalty by taking the oath, probably influenced many rebels to perjure themselves to their government. This fact became afterwards evident when many of these men were captured fighting as soldiers in the rebel army. Their invariable excuse under such circumstances was that the departure of the Union army from their vicinity compelled them to enter the rebel ranks. But it is also true that many took the oath with no other view than to attest their loyalty to their government. These were generally the poorer and illiterate classes of the people, small farmers and others, the so styled "poor white trash" of the South, but the yeomanry of Arkansas. They had no supplies for the army for which to receive vouchers, and most frequently lived at distant and exposed points where loyalty to the Union was certain to be visited with outrage and persecution. The rich and leading men of the community generally held aloof. Their sympathies were with the slaveholding aristocracy of the South. Some even of these, desired also to take the oath, but as they were generally regarded with more or less suspicion, they were often required to give bond in large sums for its faithful observance. As the civil law did not recognize these military bonds, the method subsequently adopted where they were violated was to try the offender by "Military Commissions," courts resembling "Courts Martial," but assuming a jurisdiction over civilians, guerrillas, and others not exercised by the latter. In cases of conviction a fine either less or equal to the amount of the bond was collected by the military power.

The guerrillas and partizan bands of the enemy did all in their power to injure the Union cause. The rebels were unable to cope with the national army in the open field, but they sought in every way to harass it and cut off its supplies. McBride with a force of rebel guerrillas was active in the vicinity of Yellville. In Missouri, the operations of Coleman's band and other guerrilla forces, numbering about four hundred men, near Houston and West Plains, were directed



against the lines of communication with the army. Several valuable supply trains were captured en route. Over forty wagons were burned and the supplies appropriated by the guerrillas. Lieut. Col. Samuel N. Wood, of the 6th Missouri cavalry, was very active in the pursuit of Coleman, giving him no rest, but he eluded capture or an open fight.

The system of "partizan warfare" had been adopted by the rebel government as a part of its policy. However justifiable in theory or from former experience in other lands, in the United States during the rebellion, it proved a system of lawless marauding, licentious rapine and brutal murder. Yet nevertheless, the rebel Generals in Arkansas now recognized the services of such men as McBride, Schnable, a renegade methodist clergyman, Coleman and other guerrilla chiefs, and Gen. Hindman, in a published order, devised a plan of guerrilla operations and directed the details of the system. The Union armies had ever eschewed guerrilla warfare. Curtis, in a general order, denounced the operations of Coleman and deplored their effect, not upon the army, which could not thereby be materially injured, but upon the innocent and defenceless inhabitants of the country. The rebel Generals, filled with impotent rage, by a flag of truce, sent letters to Curtis, in which they avowed their system and threatened a war of extermination if these guerrillas when captured were not treated as prisoners of war. General Hindman claimed to have received information that the rebel prisoners captured by Bowen at "Sillamore" were to be hanged, and that Curtis had declared a war of extermination. Gen. Roane had received equally reliable information that the national authorities were *compelling* the unhappy Confederate citizens of the country to take an oath of allegiance to the federal government—an oath, which as he protested, could not be respected by the Confederate authorities.

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